

**AMAZING LOVE CHRISTIAN
FELLOWSHIP**

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Noemi Doohan, M.D., Ph.D.
Public Health Officer
County of Mendocino

Dear Dr. Doohan:

I am writing to you as a pastor, and on behalf of the churches listed above (and other numerous individuals), hoping to relay the importance of our spiritual community presence alongside the health community.

Faith has and always will be an essential part of peoples' lives. Faith always grows as people come together in one belief and support each other. Religion and faith provide social support, a consistent element of happiness and good health. Regular churchgoers not only get support from their community, but they also GIVE support to others, and the altruistic activity promotes better health. Religion reinforces a belief system. People bond when they hold common opinions and beliefs. Faith attaches meaning to events. It gives folks hope, the ultimate stress reducer.

Evidence shows that faith can be a powerful stress buffer, enhancing your ability to cope with life's more serious stresses.

Faith can provide meaning and purpose. Having a deeply-felt belief system can help you cope with many of the perplexing and distressing questions that surround the meaning of existence. Why are you here? What is the meaning and purpose of life? What happens when you die?

Faith can provide hope and acceptance. It encourages a sense of optimism and hopefulness that things will work out for the best. Faith also helps you accept what doesn't work out and what you can't control.

We can see that since the COVID-19 outbreak, the stress level, alcohol abuse, domestic violence, depression and hopelessness in Mendocino County has increased. Take a look at the Sheriff's daily booking log and you will see the increase in arrests in both men and women in our community.

"We did see heightened rates of depression and anxiety and quite a few people reported being stressed more than they typically would have been before COVID-19," said Jenn Leiferman, director of the Population Mental Health and Wellbeing Program.

Harold Koenig, M.D., Associate Professor of Medicine and Psychiatry at Duke University, surveys more than a thousand studies appraising the effects of prayer on health in his book, *Handbook of Religion and Health*. Among them:

- ❖ Hospitalized people who never attended church have an average stay of three times longer than people who attend regularly.
- ❖ Heart patients were fourteen times more likely to die following surgery if they did not practice a religion.
- ❖ Elderly people who never or rarely attended church had a stroke rate double that of people who attended regularly.
- ❖ People who are more religious tend to become depressed less often. When they do become depressed, they recover more quickly.

I hope you would reconsider your view and deem churches as "essential" and we would be allowed to meet at our churches in Phase 2. We will gladly comply with the social distancing rules.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. Please feel free to contact me at (707) 513-6755 to discuss.

In His Service,

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Ziyad A. Ibrahim, Pastor

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